



# The Rocket Science of Score Points

---

Holistic Scoring and the TCAP  
Writing Assessment



# FAIR EVALUATION

---

- **HOLISTIC SCORING**
- How can an essay be graded in a fair and objective manner when the essay itself is a subjective expression of personal opinion? This question has plagued classroom instructors of composition and bedeviled testing experts for decades. One answer lies in a method called ***Holistic Scoring***.



# AN OVERALL EFFECT

---

- **Holistic Scoring** involves evaluating a writing sample by focusing on the overall effect of that writing. This process measures a writing sample's bottom-line communication effectiveness. Readers make a judgment about the overall quality of an essay by reading quickly for a total impression and not focusing upon particular aspects of "correctness" such as sentence structure or spelling.



# CONSIDERATION OF ALL FACTORS

---

- Since writing combines many skills and abilities, the combination of these skills and abilities is evaluated as a whole. There is no marking of errors, no analyzing of the parts, and no commenting by the teacher/evaluator. All factors relevant to good writing, such as capitalization, punctuation, appropriate word choice, grammar, organization, and development are taken into consideration. No single factor receives undue attention.



# ANCHOR PAPERS

---

- For large group assessment, a stratified random sample of papers is selected for initial scoring. Using the set scoring criteria, papers are selected which best exemplify each of the scoring points. These papers become “anchor papers.” After the anchor papers have been selected, readers are carefully trained using a Six-point scoring criteria in addition to the anchor papers. Each individual paper is evaluated in comparison to the scoring criteria and the anchor papers. While no two papers should ever be exactly alike, there are common characteristics for good, basic, and poor writing.

# **"TEN TENETS OF HOLISTIC SCORING"**



---

- **Reward the writer for what has been done well.**
- **Arrive quickly at the assessment by judging the overall impression the writing leaves.**
- **Hold the rubric in your head during the reading.**
- **Use the entire scoring scale.**
- **Be aware there can be a range of papers within a score point. (Not all 3's are alike.)**
- **Delay the final assessment until the entire essay is read.**
- **Score only what is on the paper.**
- **Avoid changing scores.**
- **Scoring should not reflect personal bias.**
- **Remember: This is a draft.**

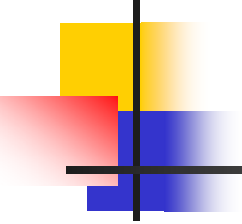


# SCORE POINT ZERO

---

- How is a paper awarded a score of zero?
- When is a paper considered “off topic”?

# SCORE POINTS 1, 2 OR 3

- 
- 
- Less overall control (words, sentences, paragraphs, and complete essay)
  - Inappropriate mechanics and grammar – accumulation or pattern of errors
  - Spelling (creative to the extent of distraction)
  - Repetitive (word choices, ideas)
  - Little or no support for ideas
  - Abstract or few details
  - Weak organizational structure
  - Simplistic or no transitions
  - Lack of purpose or sense of audience
  - Little or no syntactic variety
  - Limited vocabulary and word choices
  - Little or no distinction between spoken and formal written English





# SCORE POINTS OF 4, 5, or 6

---

- Overall sense of control (words, sentences, paragraphs, complete essay)
- Sense of sentence with minimal grade-level errors in mechanics and grammar
- Clear organizational structure in paragraphs and complete essay
- Relevant details used for support
- Effectively used transitions (with or without paragraphs)
- Syntactic variety
- Appropriately used grade-level vocabulary
- Sense of audience/voice
- Distinction between spoken and formal written English



# SCORING PRACTICE

---

- Know the rubric
- Use all the score points
- Remain objective
- Do not change your answers



??? QUESTIONS ???

---

Charlotte Woehler

[Charlotte.Woehler@state.tn.us](mailto:Charlotte.Woehler@state.tn.us)

(615) 253-4344